

YEAR 2002
EXCELLENCE IN
SURFACE COAL MINING
RECLAMATION AWARDS

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

United States Department of the Interior
Office of Surface Mining



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE: \$300

History and objectives of the program

Since passage of the Surface Mining Law (SMCRA) in 1977, land reclamation in the United States has become a built-in component of surface coal mining. In fact, successfully reclaimed land quickly begins to resemble its natural surroundings, with little about its finished appearance to suggest that it was ever mined. The better a coal mine is reclaimed, the less there is to see.

The Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining (OSM) initiated its annual Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards in 1986 to make visible the accomplishments of those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievements in environmentally-sound surface mining and land reclamation, and to highlight the experience gained from completing exemplary reclamation.

The awards program is designed so that state and federal regulators can transfer the outstanding reclamation methods and techniques to the coal mine operators who work under the Surface Mining Law nationwide. The winners are the coal mine operators who developed innovative reclamation techniques or who have completed reclamation that resulted in outstanding on-the-ground performance.

This year four types of awards will be presented:

National Awards. These annual awards are presented to coal mining companies for achieving the most exemplary mining and reclamation in the country. The awards recognize on-the-ground achievement of the Surface Mining Law.

Director's Award. One coal mining operation in the country is selected to receive the Director's Award for outstanding achievement in a specific area of reclamation. This year the award will recognize a mine operator whose dedication and commitment has resulted in outstanding cultural, historic, or archeological preservation on reclaimed coal mine land.

Best-of-the-Best Award. One operation will be selected from this year's National Award winners as the Best-of-the-Best. This special award will recognize and be presented to the specific individual(s) — mine manager, reclamation specialist, state inspector — who were directly responsible for the most outstanding accomplishments.

Special 25th Anniversary of the Surface Mining Law Awards Three mine operations will be selected from all of the past award winners (Director's awards and National awards) as the most successful reclamation under the Surface Mining Law. In this special category a bronze, silver, and gold award will be presented.

COVER PHOTO: Topsoil and sub-soil are removed using hydraulic shovels and trucks at this award winning Indiana mine site. The sub-soil is immediately transported to the reclamation area, dumped, and graded. This equipment, combined with direct haul-back methods, reduces compaction, a serious problem in valuable prime farmland soil.

Wetlands improve water quality and recreation opportunities, encourage greater biological diversity and wildlife habitat, and reduce storm and flood damage. At this award-winning Alabama site sediment ponds were reclaimed into artificial wetlands. Spillway material was removed to the level of impounded sediment, then heavy stone riprap was placed on the water control section to eliminate sedimentation downstream.



Selection of the 2002 award-winning operations.

Nominations are due to the state regulatory authorities or the Office of Surface Mining field office in non-primacy states February 1, 2002. Nominations will be screened by the regulatory authority, and the best entries (a maximum of four National Awards, one Director's Award, and an unlimited number of 25 Anniversary Awards from each state) forwarded to the Office of Surface Mining field offices by February 15, 2002. Field offices will evaluate and forward the nominations to the Office of Surface Mining Headquarters in Washington, D.C. by March 8, 2002, for judging on March 12, 2002.

Selection of winners consists of several steps. A site visit by a field office representative is made to ensure that:

1. on-the-ground performance conforms with the permit;
2. information in the nomination accurately reflects current site conditions;
3. other mining and reclamation activities at the site do not detract from the award-winning activity; and
4. each nominee's Surface Mining Law compliance record is examined to ensure that there are no outstanding violations and to determine that there is no past record of not abating violations.

A panel of judges, composed of representatives of the Office of Surface Mining evaluate the nominations and select the National and Director's Award winners. Scoring is based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum Points
Clarity and completeness of nomination package	5
Difficulty of achieving reclamation under existing conditions	20
On-site effectiveness	30
Transferability of the technique or practice	12
Increased public awareness of the Surface Mining Law	8
Long-term benefits to the community	15
Exceeds the spirit and intent of the Surface Mining Law	10

Judges' scores are totaled, and winning nominations selected. Based upon the judges' decision, the number of National Awards may vary from year to year. Awards are not limited to one per state. The Best-of-the-Best winner will be selected after visiting each of the National winners and discussing on-the-ground results with reclamation specialist(s) responsible for the work. Announcement of the Year 2002 award winners and a special presentation of awards is planned for a ceremony on August 3, 2002 — the 25 anniversary of the Surface Mining Law.

Address questions regarding nominations or the award program to the Office of Surface Mining field offices or Chuck Meyers, Office of Surface Mining, Washington, D.C. 20240. Telephone (202)208-7940; E-mail (cmeyers@osmre.gov).

Electronic copies of this flyer in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format and a list of (1986-present) winners are also available on the Office of Surface Mining web site at (www.osmre.gov/awards.htm).

Who is eligible for an award?

Surface coal mining and reclamation operations that have been conducted under a Title V permit (either interim or permanent program) may be nominated for an award. The operation's exemplary performance may be achieved during active mining, during reclamation, following bond release, or throughout the entire process.

Although Title IV Abandoned Mine Land reclamation projects are not included in this program, this aspect of reclamation is eligible for a National Award if it is integrated with Title V permitted operations.



Successful tree growth has been achieved on many eastern U.S. mine sites. However, this mixed tree stand on an award-winning West Virginia mine site began as a tree planting along the ridge. Additional trees have since "volunteered" into the favorable growing conditions created by the reclamation and now cover the entire hillside.

How to nominate a surface coal mining operation for an award.

Nominating a surface coal mining operation for an Office of Surface Mining Award is the first step in the award selection process. Nominations may be submitted by coal companies, regulatory authorities, coal associations, public interest groups, or landowners. Company officials and employees may nominate their own operations.

National Awards.

A surface coal mining operation may be nominated for outstanding achievement in a specific portion of the reclamation (e.g., design and implementation of innovative sedimentation control practices) or for outstanding overall performance in meeting goals of the Surface Mining Law. There are two broad award categories for the National Awards.

1. Ongoing mining or reclamation that has achieved excellent results but is unproven because not enough time has passed to verify the long-term effectiveness of the results. This category allows active mining and reclamation methods that show great promise to be eligible for recognition. Nominations in this category should include on-the-ground results for however long the results have been in place.

2. Reclamation that has achieved bond release, or in cases where enough time has passed to verify the long-term success of the work. Nominations submitted in this category must contain information and/or data that verifies the results. For example, a nomination for increased soil productivity on a reclaimed site would be verified with several years of crop yield data.

Director's Award

The Director's Award for 2002 will be presented for exemplary reclamation that results in cultural, historical or archaeological preservation. The nomination should include a description of the reclamation and specific information about the cultural, historical or archaeological preservation. To be eligible for this award, the cultural, historical or archaeological preservation does not have to be on the entire permit area and may only be a part of the reclaimed mine site.

Special 25th Anniversary of the Surface Mining Law Awards. This special one-time group of awards is only open to past award winners (see www.osmre.gov/awardwin1.htm for a complete list). The objective is to identify and recognize the best reclamation under the Surface Mining Law. It may be land that was reclaimed as an agricultural land use and is now being successfully farmed by the landowner, reclaimed as a fish and wildlife habitat that has grown into a sportsman's paradise, or reclaimed and returned to its pre-mining land use and today is an integral part of the surrounding landscape. Nominations for this category do not have to be as extensive as the National or Director's awards submissions. However, they should briefly describe the mining and reclamation operation and provide both narrative and photos showing the current conditions.

Rules and required information.

Nominations should be submitted to the state regulatory authority, or in non-primacy states (Tennessee and Washington) to the local Office of Surface Mining field office. Nomination packages must be developed using the following format:

A. Cover sheet containing:

1. Company name.
2. Name and location of the nominated mining operation (nearest town).
3. Permit number(s) of site being nominated.
4. Award category. Nominations may be submitted in both the Director's Award and one of the two National Award categories.
5. Name, address, phone number, (and E-mail address if available) of a company contact person (and of the person submitting the nomination if different).
6. Names and titles of all individuals directly responsible for on-the-ground reclamation at the nominated site.

B. Narrative description of the specific reclamation or environmental control techniques that resulted in exemplary performance under the Surface Mining Law. The narrative should be comprehensive, but not exceed six single-spaced typewritten pages and should describe the mining operation and the specific activity nominated for an award using the following outline:

1. Brief history/background of the mining and reclamation.
2. Description of the nominated activity or reclamation practice, including specific problems, solutions, and unusual circumstances.
3. On-site effectiveness of the work. This should be documented and quantified with data. For example, successful handling of acid materials could be shown with water quality sampling data.
4. Transferability or value of the accomplishment(s) to other mining and reclamation operations.
5. Long-term benefits to the landowner and local or regional community.

C. Color photographs (not slides). The photos should show both the specific activity and the surrounding reclamation. When examined with the narrative description, the photographs should provide a clear understanding of the exemplary accomplishments. Photographs should be 8" x 10" or smaller, and labeled to explain what the photo shows. "Before and after" photos are desirable, but not required. There is no limit to the number of photographs that may be submitted.

D. Format. Each nomination package must contain the required information (described above) in a three-ring, loose-leaf binder, plus five high-quality, stapled machine copies (e.g., Xerox) for use by the judges. Additional supporting information may be submitted with the nomination; however, it must be separate from the information described above. Nominations judged at the national level will not be returned.